



SEAPORT

NORTH CENTRAL IDAHO: CLEARWATER, IDAHO, LATAH, LEWIS, & NEZ PERCE COUNTIES

EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Seaport's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increased in September to 4.9 percent from August's rate of 4.3 percent, as shown in Seaport Table 1. In September 2001, the rate was 4.0 percent. Total employment decreased in September by 990 month-over-month, which follows seasonal trends. However the decrease is more than twice the five-year average decrease between September and August. Employment usually decreases in September because of a break between hiring seasons for recreation/agriculture and the winter hiring season for the holidays. From September 2001, total employment decreased by 830 in September 2002.

In September, *Seaport's Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* increased by 130 from August 2002, but decreased slightly (80) from September 2001. September's increase month-over-month was due to normal seasonal fluctuation in *Government Education*. *Education* increases in September because of the return of school staffs to classrooms after the summer break.

SPECIAL TOPIC

Washington State Minimum Wage

The Washington State minimum wage will increase 11 cents, to \$7.01 an hour, on January 1, 2003. Washington's minimum wage is recalculated each year in September because of a 1998 voter-approved initiative that mandates an annual cost-of-living adjustment. The adjustment is made based on changes in the U.S. Consumer Price Index for urban wage earners and clerical workers. For the 12 months ending August 2002, the index increased 1.6 percent over August 2001. That prompted a 1.6 percent increase in the current \$6.90 per hour minimum wage. The minimum wage applies to workers in both agricultural and nonagricultural jobs. Workers younger than 16 years of age may be paid 85 percent of the adult minimum wage. North Central Idaho employers, especially those in Lewiston and Moscow, keep a close eye on the minimum wage in the state of Washington. Increases in the minimum wage in Washington usually signal a need to increase entry level wages in North Central Idaho border communities because employers compete

Seaport Table 1: Labor Force & Employment
Nez Perce County, Idaho and Asotin County, Washington

	Sept 2002*	Aug 2002	Sept 2001	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	34,580	35,370	35,100	-2.2	-1.5
Unemployment	1,710	1,510	1,400	13.2	22.1
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.9	4.3	4.0		
Total Employment	32,870	33,860	33,700	-2.9	-2.5
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	34,110	35,140	34,700	-2.9	-1.7
Unemployment	1,310	1,270	1,070	3.1	22.4
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.8	3.6	3.1		
Total Employment	32,800	33,870	33,630	-3.2	-2.5
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**	26,060	25,930	26,140	0.5	-0.3
Goods-Producing Industries	5,300	5,420	5,450	-2.2	-2.8
Mining & Construction	1,510	1,550	1,570	-2.6	-3.8
Manufacturing	3,790	3,870	3,880	-2.1	-2.3
Food Processing	100	110	140	-9.1	-28.6
Lumber & Wood Products	660	720	710	-8.3	-7.0
Paper Products	1,680	1,700	1,710	-1.2	-1.8
All Other Manufacturing	1,350	1,340	1,320	0.7	2.3
Service-Producing Industries	20,760	20,510	20,690	1.2	0.3
Transportation	1,350	1,360	1,390	-0.7	-2.9
Communications & Utilities	260	270	270	-3.7	-3.7
Wholesale Trade	1,060	1,030	980	2.9	8.2
Retail Trade	4,790	4,770	5,010	0.4	-4.4
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	1,730	1,710	1,430	1.2	21.0
Services	6,750	6,820	6,760	-1.0	-0.1
Government Administration	2,690	2,750	2,730	-2.2	-1.5
Government Education	2,130	1,800	2,120	18.3	0.5

*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

for the same labor pool. The Idaho and federal minimum wage is \$5.15 an hour. There are no January 1, 2003 increases planned for either Idaho or the U.S.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Idaho & Lewis Counties

- Syringa General Hospital (SGH) in Grangeville recently received a grant from the Idaho Hospital Association to begin a Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). This grant is intended to provide financial assistance to hospital employees, area college students, and community members who will complete the educational requirements that would fill a needed staff position at SGH. As a rural hospital, SGH is particularly vulnerable to nationwide staffing shortages. It is believed that one of the most effective ways to recruit and retain skilled employees in a rural setting is to provide access for healthcare education to local persons interested in pursuing such health-related careers. Some of the more critical positions that are in demand locally and nationwide include nurses, laboratory technologists, radiology technologists, and physical therapists. Emphasis will

be placed on using the grant for students currently enrolled in one of these programs who have a desire to return to the area and work for SGH.

Latah County

- Several University of Idaho (UI) research efforts totaling more than \$4 million were among the projects included in the Defense Appropriations Bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in October. The bill will now go to the Senate and then to President Bush for his signature. UI research supported by the bill includes:
 - » \$1.2 million dollars for the UI Center for Secure and Dependable Software. The funding will be used for operations and infrastructure support for the center. The software security initiative will expand research and instruction in the design and development of technologies resulting in secure and reliable computing systems. Among other things, the research will help protect computer networks from terrorist attacks.
 - » \$2.1 million dollars for advanced materials research at UI. This includes research related to semiconductor technology. Research will also focus on the development of innovative deposition processes to produce thick film ferrite materials to improve computer control systems. Military applications of thick film ferrite magnetic materials include circulators, phase shifters, and filters. Civilian applications include semiconductor active microwave and millimeter wave circuits, and collision avoidance radar for automobiles of the future.
 - » \$1 million dollars to the UI Center for Intelligent Systems Research, with its umbrella research institute, the Microelectronics Research and Communications Institute, for the development of miniature autonomous vehicle technology. These vehicles would be capable of autonomous navigation on land, air, and under the sea. UI already has developed and tested a vehicle capable of navigating a forest environment and will use this funding to develop a small fleet of underwater vehicles.
- As part of a nationwide move, Verizon has announced layoffs of potentially 25 workers in their Moscow office. According to company officials, difficult economic times for the telecommunication industry require Verizon to eliminate 125 employees in the Northwest. Jobs targeted include engineers, employees who monitor outside cable, switches programmers, and equipment technicians.

Nez Perce & Asotin Counties

- Potlatch, the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley's largest employer, had six barges in Portland waiting to be transported to Asian and Japanese markets when a federal judge reopened the West Coast ports in October, said Mark Benson, Potlatch public affairs director for the western region. With the reopening of the ports, it's

likely those shipments will arrive at Potlatch's customers before their paperboard inventories are depleted. During the labor dispute Potlatch trucked their loads to Portland instead of using river barges and took their place in line in anticipation of the reopening. Potlatch ships 40 percent of its paperboard made in Lewiston through the Port of Lewiston down the Columbia River system to the Port of Portland. It also manufactures lumber and tissue products, such as paper napkins and toilet paper, in Lewiston.

- North Central Idaho wheat growers were slightly affected by the West Coast labor dispute. Prices for soft white wheat that was shipped and paid for immediately fell by about 20 cents a bushel at the beginning of the strike, but had started to rise after the court action to re-open the ports. "The longshoremen's labor dispute and the re-opening of West Coast ports appears to have happened early enough that North Central Idaho wheat farmers will be insulated from its effects," said Ken Blakeman, manager of Primeland Cooperatives, headquartered in Lewiston. Not all of the decrease could be blamed on the labor dispute, and prices for later delivery dates weren't affected as much, Blakeman said. Fresh and frozen produce that can't be stored as easily suffered more, Blakeman said. Had the dispute continued longer, wheat growers would have had to consider other transportation routes, such as the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico. During the labor dispute on the West Coast no workers at the Port of Lewiston were laid off.
- The Nez Perce Tribal Fish Hatchery opened in October with prayers and songs. Tribal officials recounted their 20-year struggle to fund and build the hatchery and said its completion would benefit tribal members and non-Native Americans alike. "This facility we believe is for the entire region," said Samuel Penney, chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee. The hatchery is designed to raise fish that are better suited for survival when released as juveniles to spawn in the wild when they return as adults. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) funded the \$16 million hatchery. Now BPA spends millions of dollars each year to mitigate the impact of dams on fish and wildlife. BPA Administrator Steven Wright of Portland said this hatchery will help the agency fulfill part of its mitigation responsibilities and hoped it would lead to recovery of the threatened and endangered runs. Wright noted the hatchery was built on schedule and within its budget. "That is an incredible accomplishment," he said.

Doug Tweedy, Regional Labor Economist
1158 Idaho Street, Lewiston, ID 83501
(208) 799-5000 ext. 3511
E-mail: dtweedy@jobservice.us